

August 19, 2002

**INFORMATION ON USING HR TOOLS TO HELP  
REDUCE BACKLOGS AND WAITING TIMES**

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Notice provides information on the use of existing Human Resource (HR) tools to assist facilities in meeting the temporary workload increases resulting from reducing the backlogs of veterans seeking access to the VHA health care system.

**2. BACKGROUND:** On June 17, 2002, the Backlog Reduction Task Force reported to the VHA National Leadership Board a multi-pronged strategy to meet the Secretary of Veteran Affairs' challenge to VHA to eliminate or significantly reduce the backlog of veterans waiting for their first appointments for VA health care. A key strategy to reducing the backlog is to maximize the effectiveness of the following HR tools (see pars. 3, 4, and 5).

**3. TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT OF RETIREES WITHOUT FINANCIAL PENALTY**

a. **General Information.** Federal retirement provisions require that the salary of any reemployed annuitant be reduced by the amount of the annuity, the so-called "double dipping" penalty. Facilities may request that this penalty be waived for current retirees recruited to meet the temporary increased workload to reduce or eliminate the backlog of veterans waiting for appointments. These waivers would provide that retired health care providers could be hired without reduction to their pay on a temporary basis, if no other health care providers are available for the temporary positions.

b. **Approval Process.** Facilities should submit requests to reemploy civilian annuitants without financial penalty to the HR Programs and Policies Service (051) for review and processing. Requests should contain the information specified in Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 553.201(b) and (c) or (d), as applicable. The contents need to include a brief explanation of the recruitment difficulty to support that there are no other viable staffing options to reemployment of an annuitant, and that the additional staff will be used to reduce backlogs.

c. **References**

(1) Title 5 CFR Part 553. <http://www.opm.gov/cfr/index.htm>

(2) VA Handbook 5007, Part VIII, Chapter 5, paragraph 5.  
[http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/5007\\_Pay\\_Administration.doc](http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/5007_Pay_Administration.doc)

d. **Special Considerations**

(1) This authority may be used only when there are no other reasonable staffing alternatives, i.e., there are no other acceptable candidates for the positions.

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(2) Reemployed annuitant physicians and dentists are prohibited by law from receiving special pay.

#### 4. INCENTIVES TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES

a. **General Information.** Retention allowances of up to 25 percent of basic pay may be authorized for individuals or up to 10 percent for a group of employees as incentives to prevent employees from leaving Federal service. The criteria for approval are that the individuals are serving on appointments without time limit or a minimum of 1 year, that there is a special need for the individuals' services, and a management determination that the individual or large numbers of the group are deemed likely to leave Federal service. A written job offer need not be presented to justify a retention allowance. Retention allowances may be authorized and terminated at any time, according to management need and employment conditions. Facility directors are delegated authority to approve allowances for all positions under their jurisdiction. Retention allowances must be recommended by a management official organizationally below the rank of the approving official.

b. **References**

(1) Title 5 CFR Part 575, Subpart C. <http://www.opm.gov/cfr/index.htm>

(2) VA Handbook 5007, Part VI, Chapter 3. [http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/5007\\_Pay\\_Administration.doc](http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/5007_Pay_Administration.doc)

c. **Special Considerations**

(1) Group retention allowances may not be authorized for groups of physicians or dentists; each allowance must be approved individually.

(2) A determination that an individual is "likely to leave" (VA Handbook 5007, Ch. 3; subpar. 2c) may be based on the supervisor's discussion with the employee(s), evidence of high demand for the occupation in the community, solicitation of the individual for employment, or job offers.

#### 5. RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY EMPLOYEES

a. **General Information.** Cash and time off awards may be granted in recognition of sustained performance beyond normal job requirements or contributions and services that benefit VA. An example of a special contribution might be a physician scheduling a Saturday clinic.

b. **References**

(1) Title 5 CFR Part 451. <http://www.opm.gov/cfr/index.htm>

(2) VA Handbook 5017, Part III. [http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/5017\\_Employee\\_Recognition\\_And\\_Awards.doc](http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/5017_Employee_Recognition_And_Awards.doc)

c. **Special Considerations**

(1) The type and amount of the award will be determined according to the value of the contribution, according to the table in VA Handbook 5017, Part III, Appendix A.

(2) Facility directors have delegated authority to approve awards of up to \$3,000 for individuals, and awards of up to \$10,000 for groups.

(3) Individuals or teams may receive more than one award in a year, subject to the aggregate limitations on pay and in accordance with local negotiated procedures for approving awards for bargaining unit employees.

**4. RESPONSIBILITY:** The Management Support Office (10A2) is responsible for the contents of this Notice. Questions may be addressed to 202-273-8910.

**5. RESCISSIONS:** This VHA Notice expires August 31, 2003.

S/ Nevin M. Weaver for  
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.  
Under Secretary for Health

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